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ABSTRACT

This report, based upon the experiences of researchers visiting Hungary in summer 1994, highlights issues of the computability and adaptability of American community colleges to the developing Hungarian postsecondary educational system. The researchers visited with the representatives of the government and universities as well as with private individuals to determine the expectations for the postsecondary system. Visits were conducted at four college locations (Szekesfehervar, Kecskemet, Balaton Akademia, and Szombathely), and each site's current program, relationship to its constituents, and future plans were evaluated. The results of the visits and interviews indicated that Hungarian educational policy makers have a desire to encourage more students to transfer to universities, to provide short-term vocational and occupational training, and to offer more life-long learning opportunities. The report's recommendations include: (1) the creation of a master plan by government, business, and educational leaders; (2) the inclusion of community colleges in the Hungarian higher education configuration; (3) the utilization of national feasibility/needs assessment studies to accurately gauge student, academic, national, and community needs; (4) integration with and involvement of the local community in college establishment, organization, and governance; (5) the establishment of a U.S.-Hungarian Partnership to secure ongoing assistance by experienced community college leaders from the United States; (6) the use of existing facilities, such as former Soviet army barracks, and the development of international funding sources to speed the development of the Hungarian community college system; and (7) the establishment of a U.S. assistance project based in Hungary. (MAB)

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TOWARDS AN HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Mellanders' work in Hungary is part of the ongoing Hungarian Higher Education Project. Initiated by Derek Bok, President Emeritus of Harvard University, the Hungarian Higher Education Project continues work begun under the auspices of President Bok and the Citizens Democracy Corps, a US-Government initiative to bring private sector assistance to Central Europe which operated in Hungary from 1991 - 1994. The current Project brings US academic and educational leaders from around the United States to undertake a series of seminars, conferences, and in-depth research projects to assist the transformation of higher education in Hungary at the direct request of the Hungarian Rectors Conference.

The present report is a valuable summary of the current status of the nascent development of a community college system in Hungary prepared by two of America's top experts in the field of community colleges. Educational leaders throughout Hungary have recognized for some time the critical importance of establishing a system of short cycle, post-secondary training, and are looking for the guidance and assistance of those who have experience in the field. The Mellanders are recognized leaders in the United States in creating and running successful community colleges, and we believe that their report offers sound and concrete recommendations for the development of a community college system suited to the needs of Hungary. Clearly, further work is needed. Hungary has taken the necessary first steps, but will need further assistance, both technical and financial. The observations and recommendations of the present report provide a solid base from which to start.

The Hungarian Higher Education Project is supported by the following organizations:

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Stephen E. Benkő
Benkő and Associates
Hungary

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TOWARDS AN HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Dean Gustavo A. Mellander and Professor Nelly Mellander wish to thank the many individuals who made their two week trip to Hungary not only educationally profitable but culturally enriching as well. We want to specifically thank Stephen Benkő and his associates, Juliana Chaszar and Dr. Al Felzenberg. Their professional assistance, extensive knowledge and abiding interest in Hungarian higher education proved invaluable.

We also want to thank the many government, university and private individuals who received us and apprised us of the state of higher education in Hungary. We were encouraged by their optimism and sincere interest to provide their countrymen with expanded opportunities.

Introduction

The American Community College is uniquely an American invention. It has aided and assisted millions of individuals develop their university-level academic potential, secure vocational/occupational training, or acquire fulfilling lifelong educational enrichment experiences. But as the authors indicated to local and national officials throughout their June 17-July 3, 1994, visit in Hungary, the American Community College system should not and cannot be transplanted lock, stock and barrel to Hungary. Nevertheless, it can be a model.

Intelligent and thoughtful Hungarians seeking to serve the ever-growing needs of their nation have already wisely studied post-secondary models from such countries as France, Sweden and Canada. The United States provides yet another post-secondary education model. The authors are convinced that the need, the desire and the potential exists in Hungary not to transplant the American Community College system, but to establish an Hungarian Community College System. The work has begun, but of course, there is yet much more to be achieved.

An Overview

Hungary wishes to meet the educational needs of its population. Although estimates vary, it appears that some ten to twelve percent of Hungary's population attends universities and colleges. Other post-secondary institutions exist, but it is felt by some that the American style community college could provide other methods of addressing the country's education needs.

Our research surfaced a clear and precise interest among national and local governments, as well as among significant business entities to afford an increasing number of Hungarians a wider variety of post-secondary educational opportunities.

The goals they identified are: a) to encourage more students to transfer to universities, b) to provide short-term vocational/occupational training and, c) to offer continuing education opportunities on an ongoing basis. These are the classic goals of community colleges.

Since some of these goals may already be addressed by existing institutions, such as training centers run by the Ministry of Labor, care and sensitivity should be

exercised. If existing institutions are indeed meeting some of these needs, their efforts should not be duplicated or infringed upon by establishing new institutions. It is recommended that open discussions be held so that joint agreements on how to proceed can be fashioned. Successful models of cooperation among U. S. post-secondary institutions exist which can be studied to create an Hungarian modus vivendi.

Discussions about the future of higher education, begun over four years ago, have already led to reforms and recommended courses of action. University leaders and the national government worked cooperatively to achieve that end. Enabling procedures are presently being drafted to help implement new legislation which Hungary passed in September, 1993 to reform higher education. Although the December, 1994 deadline might have to be extended, this important task clearly has to be completed. It is suggested that community colleges be incorporated into these guidelines so that they may become a part of Hungary's higher education system. If they are not, Hungarian community colleges may die before they are born.

Since preliminary explorations about community colleges have already begun, the concepts of community colleges are not alien to a significant number of Hungarian leaders. We visited four separate sites throughout Hungary in which precise steps have been taken to establish community college-type institutions. Although they varied considerably, it is clear that each of them has the potential for success. We list our impressions of each of the four.

Visit To Székesfehérvár

Székesfehérvár, 66 kilometers from Budapest, has a population of 120,000 and the metropolitan region of 300,000. The community college organizers in Székesfehérvár began to explore the community college concept several years ago.

The city was a military city under the Russians; higher education was ignored and thus suffered. The city leaders are now very interested in collaboration with local area businesses and industries, in fostering more higher education opportunities. They rightfully perceive that a community college could be an important arm in the region's on-going economic transformation. Székesfehérvár is quickly becoming an important industrial area. Phillips, Ford, Siemens, Alcoa, and other

foreign-based industries have established themselves in the area. The transition to privatization is progressing. All of this has highlighted the need for ever-growing higher educational services, needs that are not being met by existing institutions. A local city hall official indicated that their 15 middle schools graduate 4,000 students a year. He pointed out that the lack of further educational opportunities forced many youngsters to leave. For instance, some 6,000 students, ages 18 and 25, leave Székesfehérvár every year to pursue their higher education studies. That number increases to 15,000 if one includes the outlying areas. Not only are there post-secondary needs to educate youngsters but there is a need to retrain older adults as well.

We also met with the new director of the Computer Science Institute of the Kálmán Kandó College, Dr. Péter Lőrincz. The main location of the college is Budapest, where eight of its nine institutes operate. The ninth institute, in Székesfehérvár, was founded in 1976 to address the needs of the local region. It has specialized in computers, engineering, and information systems education. Recently there has been a growing interest to offer courses in business and business administration. The area's significant industrial base is undergoing privatization and thus some rather serious adjustments are occurring. One of the local factories, for example, has seen its work force reduced from 20,000 a few years ago to only 5,000 at the present. It is now completely privatized and it highlights the fact that when an enterprise is "privatized" some workers lose their jobs, and others need to have their skills upgraded.

Luckily, the city's continued potential for growth and success is significant for a number of reasons. 1) it is the locus of international trade routes; major roads, including international trucking lines, transverse the area, 2) it has a well-trained labor force, specifically in such areas as computer and information services, 3) it is relatively close to Budapest, 4) there are other industrial towns nearby that form a beneficial symbiotic relationship enhancing Székesfehérvár's leadership role, 5) the city government is very supportive of the area's burgeoning economic base and has supported a modernization of its infrastructure with telephone lines, etc., and finally, 6) the unemployment rate of 12% is lower than the national average of 15%.

The college and city have been exploring the possibilities of establishing a community college along the U. S. model for nearly three years. In August, 1992, they visited two U. S. community colleges for a one-week period. They are

familiar with the three traditional goals of community colleges, a) university transfer, b) vocational/occupational training, and c) continuing education. They are informed and receptive to taking the necessary steps to establish such an institution.

Summary

This location has some very important positive aspects. First, there is a committed and knowledgeable leadership both at the college and in city government. They know what they want to do and they are willing to devote the energy, resources and time to achieve it. Secondly, they have qualified teachers, particularly in the area of technology, computers, business administration, etc. Thirdly, they have viable, firmly-built, well-constructed buildings, (former Soviet barracks), that could be remodeled relatively easily to serve as modern educational facilities. There are extensive grounds adjacent to the barracks that could be utilized to support the college's future curricula development and its student services needs, and provide an excellent academic and learning environment. Lastly, given the area's economic and industrial base, a community college style institution could assist the local government in supporting existing businesses and industries as well as attracting new ones.

Visit to Kecskemét

The city, 85 km from Budapest in the very heart of Hungary, has a population of 100,000 to 120,000. It is primarily an agricultural region which produces a variety of vegetables and fruits which are sold and transported fresh or canned. Local vineyards also support a thriving wine industry.

The city is neither provincial nor isolated. It boasts three different types of colleges. They reflect the area's strengths: one for agriculture, one for technology and engineering, and one for teacher education. There are approximately 6,700 students in each institution. They have separate administrations, and some believe duplication exists in the various departments.

After the democratic changes in 1988 and 1989, these colleges began to explore new educational structures. They have been particularly influenced by existing

European and USA models. We met with the deputy mayor of Kecskemét, Mr. Antal Hideg, and it is clear that the city is a strong supporter of the community college concept. The deputy mayor pointed out that they had already turned over the barracks and the land to the college. Because there is concern over the lack of dormitory space, the commuter college concept is all the more attractive since most community college students commute.

Deputy Major Hideg noted a need for middle managers specifically in such fields as real estate, insurance, and allied health professions. He supported the university transfer function of community colleges, but he felt students should be able to pursue short-term vocational education as well.

He mentioned that although there are a number of local industries in the area, there are very few large ones. That, ironically enough, is considered an advantage since many of the former large industries have gone bankrupt given the prioritization changes and adjustments of the past five years. The area is an established and bustling fruit, vegetable and meat processing center. Heinz Ketchup, for instance, hires some 6,500 individuals.

Deputy Mayor Hideg felt it was essential for the government to be supportive of the educational infrastructure which would in turn assist these industries to prosper. He is concerned over the existing condition of the buildings, the former Soviet barracks, as they were left in poor shape when the Soviets left four years ago. Unfortunately, the buildings have deteriorated since then and will be in much worse condition in another four years. Therefore, a timely solution is of the essence. Nevertheless, some salvaging of the barracks has been accomplished and he feels his town is ahead of most other towns.

We met with Dr. Márta Dovala, director of the Teacher Training College at Kecskemét and representatives of the city's other educational institutions. Together they have devoted time and effort to discern the area's needs and potential. The group's tentative goals are 1) to be more efficient, 2) to increase training/curricula flexibility to provide students a wider range and more choices, 3) to fulfill the emerging local needs, 4) to work closely with the local governmental, business and agricultural leaders to achieve these goals.

They want to facilitate student transfer into higher levels of training at other institutions, and to develop an articulation system so that they can accept and give

credit for courses taken at other Hungarian and European institutions. In other words, they are trying to expand both horizontally and vertically. Throughout all this, they are anxious to maintain the Hungarian flavor in higher education.

They have plans for a form of education which is rather forward looking and bold in a number of ways. It would, for instance, eliminate the entrance examination, develop a core curriculum to equalize high school backgrounds, establish more extra-curriculum activities, grant a certificate after two years, provide more elective courses for majors and develop an articulation policy. They want students to be able to move more quickly through their educational experiences. They also want to create a customer-friendly system whereby students could step out after a year or two, go to work and then continue their education at some other time.

In their desire to be very sensitive to students' needs, they have identified the community college model as both a ladder to universities and an opportunity to upgrade the skills of existing workers or of those who have lost their jobs. All of these initiatives relate closely to those undertaken by most American community colleges.

The present academic buildings are too small to accommodate more students. The local government, as an indication of its commitment to expand educational opportunities, has offered the Soviet barracks and the adjoining grounds. It is a very large piece of property, over 180 hectares. Needless to say, a very lovely and efficient campus could be developed on those grounds.

A $100,000 grant was received from the World Bank and was used to assess the area and plan the layout of the facilities. The plan has been approved by the local government. A forint equivalent of one million dollars was also granted by the Ministry of Education to prepare detailed construction plans, to repair the roofs and complete other necessary maintenance to preserve the barracks from further deterioration.

The college organizers estimate they need 40 million dollars to refurbish the existing barracks and build out their college campus. That may be an overly ambitious expectation. The World Bank, they have been advised, does not grant money to upgrade physical plants and therefore cannot be a source of this needed revenue.

Summary

We were impressed with the energy and commitment of the Kecskemét organizers, as well as the serious planning they have done and the adventuresome quality of the group. Independent of their community college project, they continue to work on new education proposals. They are, for example, seeking funds to establish a foreign language center and to develop training opportunities for allied health providers such as ambulance, dentistry and neurological specialists. They have corresponded with some American colleges but have not visited the United States as yet. Their contacts are more extensive with European countries. They expressed a desire to receive guidance to help them decide how they should organize themselves, whether by departments, divisions etc., which majors should be emphasized, what type of credit system should be established, how to evaluate their progress, and finally, a system to examine their core curriculum to achieve a balance between general education courses and professional courses.

Visit to Balaton Akadémia

The Akadémia hosted a two-day national conference of the MEFOK (the Hungarian Chamber of University and College Educators) which we attended. We presented a paper and answered questions about American community colleges.

The Akadémia is located in a solidly-built, attractive former Jesuit educational institution. They only have some fifty students and are trying to achieve community college status. They have been encouraged to collaborate closely with the local universities, but they do not feel that offers them the best working relationship.

The commitment and interest evidenced by the director, István Szijártó, and his colleagues is sincere and very intense. The project, clearly in its infancy, would benefit from a feasibility/needs assessment study. It would be best to complete that study before a recommendation is made on this location.

Visit to Szombathely

Of all the sites visited, the organizers at Szombathely, a city 220 kilometers from

Budapest with a population of about 90,000, have made the most progress. They have moved in a logical and efficient fashion towards their goal of establishing an American-style community college. They have invested energy and funds as well.

We met with Dr. Ágnes Paksy who is the chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Apaczai Csere Janos Foundation and with foundation's director, Mr. Gábor Győrffy. The foundation was created in 1989 to establish "an autonomous collegium to include primary, secondary and college education." The foundation enjoys an unusual degree of autonomy and independence which it hopes will permit it to offer innovative programs. They have established an extensive working network of local educators, businessmen and city officials. They, too, have acquired former military barracks, but these were built 100 years ago by the Austrian-Hungarian government and later used by the Soviets.

The foundation has been quite entrepreneurial. It raised several hundred thousand dollars, commissioned architectural plans by a well-respected Hungarian architect and gutted one of the main buildings in anticipation of funding from U. S. sources to refurbish the building. Unfortunately, those funds never materialized.

The foundation did develop a feasibility study in February, 1993, but it is now outdated. They also established a working relationship with Roane State

Community College in Tennessee a year ago. A delegation from Szombathely visited that institution in 1993 and the president of Roane arrived for a short visit in early July, 1994. That relationship and others should be encouraged.

Unfortunately, as noted above, the foundation spent considerable money pursuant to the promises of a visiting consultant that never materialized. The foundation's prestige and image has therefore suffered among local businesses. They are in the process of rebuilding that support and trust, which will be important if they are to succeed.

Summary

Their current plans are sensible. They would address the area's re-training and economic development needs, with the initial curricula concentrating on computer science, foreign languages, management, and legal studies. There is also a strong interest in ecology and interdisciplinary studies. The area has two higher

educational institutions, a teacher training college and a nurse training college. The community college organizers have already spoken with them and have begun concrete discussions on articulation, academic planning, sharing of resources, etc. They intend to participate in short-term educational planning with them and ultimately may also apply for resources jointly. These wise steps towards collaboration and shared planning should strengthen their opportunity for success.

Their independence, as a foundation-supported institution, has provided them considerable flexibility, but it has also hindered them since they are not part of the government-supported infrastructure. Not being a recognized educational institution they do not receive normative state funding and therefore the foundation has had to subsidize the institution which offers courses in a number of locations throughout the region. They have a serious need for further capital funds to complete their recently gutted building.

But in spite of these obstacles, there is reason for optimism. Much has been accomplished, clear-thinking prevails, and a desire to succeed predominates. Szombathely could be a model for all of Hungary.

The Goal and Recommendations

Goal:

Hungary wishes to meet the needs of a growing number of individuals who need post-secondary training. Some need an entry path into university education. Others need short-term vocational training. Others who have lost their jobs need retraining. Others need to upgrade their skills to retain their jobs, i.e., as factories/businesses are modernized, employees must be computer literate.

Clearly American community colleges have successfully addressed these and other educational needs. It would be wise to learn from their mistakes and successes.

Recommendations:

1. **Master Plan.**

   National and local government officials as well as business and educational leaders should be enlisted to develop a master plan for all Hungarian higher education. Careful planning that will include all segments of society will help focus its leaders on the country's opportunities and problems. From that, a clear direction and a modus operandi can emerge. This project, collaborative as it must be, will take time to complete.

2. **Include Community Colleges.**

   The needs of the present are upon us. Therefore, we suggest the concept of community colleges be included in Hungary's higher education configuration. The emerging obligations and potential services of all post-secondary institutions should be incorporated into the guidelines that are being developed to implement the recently enacted higher education legislation. This is the opportune time to include community colleges.

3. **Feasibility Study.**

   To ascertain which areas need community colleges and where support exists for them, a national feasibility/needs assessment study should be conducted. It would collect and evaluate student, academic, national and community needs. The study should begin by highlighting the experiences of the four sites detailed in our report. Serious efforts have been made and progress has been achieved. We should build upon their experiences. One or more of them could serve as a "pilot" project. But other regions of the country should not be ignored. Their needs should be assessed as well. Budapest, in particular, comes to mind. Community colleges have been very successful in meeting the needs of urban populations, particularly the needs of its working population.

4. Guidelines on How to Get Started: Variety Is The Spice of Life

{From Gustavo A. Mellander: The Community College Experience in the United States (1994)}

"It is important to emphasize over and over again that community colleges, if they are to succeed, must meet the needs of their own individual population and region. There has been a variety of means by which community colleges have been organized in the United States. Most community colleges, however, are now established in their own districts with a local autonomous governing board. In years past, some community colleges were organized as part of the school system. They were really considered as grades 13 and 14 in a number of states. However, that movement has waned and most colleges are fully independent of the local school district. In other states, the responsibility for the establishment and the operation of two-year institutions has been placed in the hands of the state universities. The University of Kentucky, for instance, and Pennsylvania State University have two-year centers throughout their particular states. New York State has developed an effective system of community colleges and two-year technical institutes that are under state university control. While the City of New York has its own separate system of community colleges under the City University of New York.

The variety of community college programs and governance structures may seem to some chaotic and confused, but that is not the case. Successful community colleges simply reflect their local soil. The logical conclusion is that what is good for one locale may not be appropriate for another. Much depends on how other higher education institutions in the region are meeting local needs.

More and more states are looking to the total picture -- setting out to determine long-range higher education needs, developing master plans that assign responsibilities to existing institutions and establishing new institutions where needed. These state educational master plans have provided form and direction. A number of states have included such key propositions in their master plan as (a) the need for a network of

low tuition commuting colleges to make higher education accessible to all residents, (b) effective articulation between two-year colleges and universities, and (c) close collaboration between the business world and colleges.

Here are some guidelines for starting a community college, based on successful experiences.

A. Appoint a citizens' committee made up of school officials, higher education leaders, government and business officials to help garner support for the projected college. Determine with this group the plan to be pursued. Study legislation that exists in states that have successful community colleges. Model laws have been developed and examples of those enacted by numerous states are readily available. The goal is not to copy them intact, but to adapt them to local needs. A wide variety of models exist such as school district community colleges, autonomous community college districts, and community colleges operated under the aegis of the state university.

   Perhaps a combination that would meet the historic traditions of the region would be sensible. Once again, the local history, the local environment, the local needs and wishes of the population are paramount in establishing a successful community college.

B. Conduct studies of the communities' higher education needs, directed perhaps by the citizens' committee. Or a professional director and staff can be selected. Among areas to be studied are the following:

   --Population trends and directions of the area to be served. Survey school teachers and population experts to project potential enrollments. Consult with prominent business and government officials for their vision and needs for the area.

   --Study the current college-going population. What percent of youngsters are going to college? What percent of individuals

are beyond the traditional college entry age? How many people in their late 20s, and 30s and 40s, would benefit from further formal education?

--Community manpower needs, present and future. Determine by consultation with employers and state experts, the kinds of manpower training needed and examine possible curriculums necessary to meet those needs. These could be short-term courses, vocational/occupational programs as well as professional programs. Reflect not only on clear existing needs, but project future development. Establish citizen advisory committees for each profession or occupation. They can help develop curricula, provide internships for students and ultimately employment.

--Financial support. Potential of community support. Community colleges have had either no tuition or very low tuition to be able to serve all students. What kind of tax base would there be for obtaining necessary funds for a college? What could be expected from the regional, state and national governments?

--Talent needed to manager and operate the college. What teaching and staff resources are available? Can others be trained in a reasonable amount of time?

--Curriculum needs. Aside from the citizen input recommended above, involve university personnel with the planning and consult to determine transfer curricula which would meet their transfer requirements. Secure approval, develop formal, binding agreements to protect the students.

--Needs for campus facilities, both temporary and permanent. Many U. S. colleges began in temporary facilities. High schools, office buildings and even factories have been successfully converted.

--Adult education needs of the community. These could be obtained through polls and surveys. The average age of community college students nationwide is nearly thirty, most work full-time and most attend classes in the evening or on weekends. There is an enormous population to be served. But before it can be served -- its needs must be identified and then students encouraged.

C. Once the committee and study groups have determined the need and the feasibility of establishing a college, the general public should be apprised of the plans, proposals, and the part they must play. Normally, this requires intensive effort and campaigning. Several off-shoot committees should be appointed. All civic groups, business associations, government entities, educational organizations, media communications, and potential users of the college must be thoroughly acquainted and intimately involved in the creation of a community college. The wider the base, the deeper the involvement -- the better the chances of success.

D. After the public is sufficiently aroused and acquainted with the project, the forces guiding the program may wish to seek an election to approve establishment of the college. A strong indication of popular support will help secure more private and government support. Conversely, if there is little popular support, it would be wise to either (a) re-group and re-intensify the effort or (b) abandon the project.

E. Assuming the voters approve its establishment, steps should be taken immediately to devise a schedule on how, where, and when to open the college. Seize the momentum and proceed.

F. The question of governance should be decided. Many U. S. community colleges have autonomous Board of Trustees who have fiduciary responsibility and academic overview of the college. Some Boards are appointed by government entities and some are elected. They select the college president,

approve other appointments, protect, defend and advocate for the college.

In other states, the community colleges are parts of the state university and thus, do not have local governing boards. But "advisory" boards may exist. In other states, such as Virginia, there is a State Board, appointed by the governor, and a State Chancellor who appoints the local college presidents from recommendations made to him by the local advisory boards.

G. The newly appointed president leads a group to establish college goals, develop curricula, and address operational and organizational structures."

5. U. S. - Hungarian Partnership.

We recommend the establishment of a series of visits to secure the on-going assistance of experienced United States community college educational leaders. On-site visits to both countries and long-term on-going relationships between seasoned community colleges and the budding new ones should be established. Care should be taken to select U. S. partners desirous of sharing their knowledge and not mercenary profiteers.

6. Funding.

To succeed, money will have to be invested. The wheel need not be re-invented for that would be an unnecessary and wasteful exercise. Any Hungarian model should be built on local strengths. It therefore is not recommended that competing colleges be built, or that new buildings be constructed if existing structures, i.e., military barracks, can be refurbished.

United States governmental agencies or international funding sources may be available for start-up seed money. I am sure they would want solid evidence of Hungarian commitment from its governmental, educational and business sectors to the goal of establishing community colleges before investing in this venture.

7. Administrative and Logistical Support.

We suggest the directors of any U. S. assistance project for community college development be based in Hungary, not in the United States. We have been impressed with the intelligence, commitment and experience of Benkó & Associates and suggest they be seriously considered as the primary administrators.